

DCI/IC 72-0961

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Members of the NSCIC Working Group

SUBJECT: Working Group Evaluation of NIEs

1. This memorandum sets forth a proposal by which the Working Group would become involved in the evaluation of published National Intelligence Estimates in response to the Presidential memorandum of 5 November 1971 and NSCID No. 1.

2. Both of these documents call for improvement in the "quality, scope and timeliness of the community's product." Because of the importance of the NIE documents and because these estimates are intended for the use of high-level consumers, it appears appropriate that attention of the Working Group be directed to an evaluation of the extent to which NIE publications are responding to the needs of the policy-making levels of the federal government.

3. At Tab A is a description of past surveys of user reactions to National Intelligence Estimates, including the 1969 request of the DCI to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for their views or suggestions as to how NIEs on Soviet military subjects might be made "most useful" to them. The responses contributed to a marked revision in the format of these estimates.

4. The success of this effort suggests that involvement of these same top-level officials, or their representatives on the NSCIC Working Group, in the evaluation of NIEs on a fairly broad basis could provide valuable inputs for the improvement of the National Intelligence Estimates process.

5. Accordingly, I am recommending that the Working Group approve this as a project for a six-month period and carry it out in the following manner:

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a. The Working Group will select the particular NIEs which are to be evaluated.

(1) Twenty-eight NIEs, including one Memorandum to Holders, have been published in 1972 as compared with 28 in 1971 and 26 in 1970. The frequency of publication in 1972 ranged from a high of five in May to none in February and one each in January, July, August, September and November.

(2) Should the Working Group elect, for instance, to initiate the project with a review of some of the NIEs published in the last quarter of 1972, the selection would be from the following:

NIE 11-3-72	Soviet Strategic Defenses
NIE 11-8-72	Soviet Forces for International Attack
NIE 12-72	The USSR and the Changing Scene in Europe
NIE 20-72	Problems in U.S.-West European Relations
NIE 32.1-72	Bangladesh
NIE 36.1-72	Egypt after the Russian Ouster
NIE 36.2-72	Iraq's Role in Middle Eastern Problems
NIE 75/76-72	The Horn of Africa
NIE 89-72	Venezuela: The Politics of Oil

(3) Estimates projected for publication in the first quarter of 1973 (including several originally scheduled for completion in the fourth quarter of 1972) are:

NIE 3-72	International Petroleum Prospects
NIE 11/20-72	Soviet Posture on Mutual Balanced Force Reductions

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NIE 91-72	Argentina
NIE 11-10-73	The Uses of Soviet Military Power in Distant Areas
NIE 13-8-73	China's Weapons Program for Strategic Attack
NIE 32-73	Pakistan
NIE 36.7-73	Syria
NIE 85-73	Cuba

b. The Working Group chairman will forward a copy of each NIE to be evaluated, and two copies of an evaluation questionnaire (proposed format of which is at Tab B) to the Working Group representative of each NSCIC principal. It is intended that the evaluations be prepared only by personnel who are not a part of the intelligence production community.

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c. The evaluation is to be accomplished within 30 days, and a copy of each completed questionnaire returned to the Working Group chairman. The other copy of each completed questionnaire is to be retained by the Working Group member as basis for his comments when the responses of the entire group are discussed at the next meeting.

d. Once all evaluations have been received, the chairman's staff will prepare a summary of the comments for distribution to all members and to the Office of National Estimates.

e. The evaluations of each estimate will be discussed at the next following Working Group meeting, at which time the Director, Office of National Estimates, will be invited to bring with him two O/NE Board and Staff representatives responsible for the particular estimate or area of estimating.

f. Minutes of the discussion on each NIE will be made available to the CIA Office of National Estimates. As appropriate, the Chairman of the NSCIC and the Director of Central Intelligence will be provided any recommendations which may arise in the course of Working Group discussion of the estimates.

6. Discussion of the evaluations of individual NIEs at the Working Group meetings is expected to be a valuable element of the project. The intelligence community has never before had a forum in which a broad spectrum of the representatives of high level consumers can meet with the chiefs of intelligence production organizations to voice their views with respect to specific estimates or types of estimates. The NSCIC Working Group provides such a forum.

7. In the process of completing the evaluation, Working Group members will be encouraged to solicit inputs from those user elements of their organizations which they consider are most concerned with the subject matter of the estimate. If additional copies of the questionnaire are desired, they will be provided. It may well be that individual members of the Working Group will desire to have complete questionnaires filled out by different elements of their departments or agencies. Such a response is highly desirable if it will contribute to an expression of consumer reaction to the NIE.

8. I recommend that the Working Group approve initiation of this project at its next meeting, now tentatively planned for shortly after mid-January. At this meeting, I hope we can reach agreement as to the particular NIEs to be evaluated, and can decide upon any changes to the proposed questionnaire which any member considers will enhance its utility for our purposes.

Bronson Tweedy  
Chairman, NSCIC Working Group

Attachments:

1. Tab A
2. Tab B

DCI/IC/PRG/[ ] 19 Dec 72

Distribution:

orig - PRG subject (filed PRG Project 6-72)

(1) - Mr. Tweedy

1 - [ ] chrono *file D*

1 - PRG chrono *file d*

1 - each member with attachments

## SURVEYS OF USER REACTIONS TO NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES

1. The expansion of the U. S. intelligence community since World War II has resulted, among other things, in a marked increase in the output of intelligence products--estimates, serial publications, reports, bulletins, memoranda, etc. Wide variation exists in the audiences to which individual products are addressed and in the number of copies which are disseminated. Because of concern as to whether the right audience was being reached or whether the products themselves were responsive to the needs of consumers, various intelligence organizations have conducted surveys of one type or another to measure consumer reactions, usually in the interest of obtaining comments which would provide basis for improvement of the product. The following paragraphs describe the more important of such efforts relating to National Intelligence Estimates, and an assessment of the results achieved.

### 2. Survey of 1955

a. In February 1955 the Director of Central Intelligence asked the Board of National Estimates to conduct an informal survey of the use which consumers made of National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's). The survey, which was undertaken after four years experience with the national estimate system, was intended to shed light on (1) whether NIE's were circulated appropriately; (2) who, besides the National Security Council, were the ultimate consumers; (3) how extensively NIE's were actually used by these consumers; and (4) the extent to which, as then written, the NIE's met such needs.

b. The survey was conducted in two stages. The first was a written questionnaire addressed to all offices and agencies receiving NIE's and intended to indicate NIE dissemination within each agency. The second stage was a series of interviews with a sample of policy-maker consumers to ascertain what use they actually made of NIE's. The survey was not intended to obtain opinions regarding the adequacy of NIE content or judgments on changes to make them

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more useful. The primary goal was to establish the distribution pattern of NIE's and to indicate the kinds of uses to which they were put.

c. The survey indicated that an average of 249 NIE's were distributed regularly to the White House, the NSC, the Operations Coordinating Board and the major departments and agencies with national security responsibilities. Many of these were further distributed to major commands and missions outside Washington.

d. Only a relatively few NIE's (selected by intelligence and screening officers) were seen by the President and department or agency heads, and in such cases these top-level individuals usually read only the conclusions, briefs, or selected portions. The exceptions were most likely to be NIE's dealing with crisis situations requiring urgent and high-level policy decisions. NIE's were, however, found to be extensively read by second and third echelon officials in major departments and agencies and by various staffs responsible for national security planning and execution. It appeared that some NIE's did not reach all of the departmental policy or planning levels or other key officials who might have found them useful. In some cases, this appeared to result from failure of subordinates to pass the NIE's to their chiefs, and in others the criteria for distribution appeared to be overly restrictive.

e. NIE's were found to be most generally used for background purposes, although some were used in working on specific planning and policy problems. The majority of users indicated that the format and problem coverage of NIE's were adequate, but many expressed dissatisfaction with particular NIE's. There were complaints that the NIE's were too long to be read in full by top-level individuals; they were said by some to be too general for detailed use in policy planning and execution; and some were said to be not relevant or sufficiently timely for use in consideration of specific policy problems. Overall importance of such complaints was not considered sufficient to warrant action to alter the format or content of NIE's. Each Intelligence Advisory Committee\* member was asked to reexamine the pattern of NIE distribution so as to improve the usefulness of NIE's to the policy, planning and executive branches of his agency. Each IAC agency was

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\* Succeeded by the U. S. Intelligence Board on 15 September 1958

requested to brief new key officials within its department on the nature of the NIE and the means at their disposal for requesting NIE's responsive to specific intelligence problems they might have.

3. Conference with the Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Planning (1957)

The DCI, Director of National Estimates and his BNE members met on 25 July 1957 with Robert W. Bowie, Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Planning to discuss the form and content of the NIE program. Mr. Bowie's suggestions to enhance the usefulness of NIE's to the policy planning process were as follows:

a. There was undue emphasis on precise statements of probability, with too little discussion of underlying factors.

b. In many cases, it would be useful to discuss more possibilities, even if they had only a 20 percent chance of eventuating.

c. The estimate should show the degree to which predictions were based on evidence as opposed to judgment.

d. Estimates should put more stress on the degree to which U. S. action could affect the predicted line of development, and what kinds of U. S. action could have impact.

e. NIE's were not very readable, even on interesting subjects--the conclusions were "dehydrated" and lacked flavor. He also suggested that the IAC promulgate as "think pieces" a series of papers written by a single person or a small group (in the manner for Foreign Affairs articles) for consideration by policy-makers.

4. Survey of NIE Distribution (1959-1960)

a. This survey effort had two aspects: (1) the circulation of a questionnaire enclosed in seven selected NIE's published during the period July 1959 to February 1960 to obtain certain detailed information regarding the readership of NIE's, and (2) an inquiry to the distribution offices of the USIB agencies to

determine how NIE distribution is controlled. The latter is not relevant to the present study. The survey was undertaken to investigate the nature of and causes for an apparent large increase in NIE distribution from 250 in 1956; by 1960 some 365 copies of NIE's were regularly being sent to recipients according to a standard distribution list, and about 85 more were held in reserve for special distribution. The survey ascertained that the substantial increase since 1956 was attributed to the following factors:

- (1) Natural expansion of readership as the utility and significance of NIE's became more firmly established throughout the government.
- (2) The growing number of senior officials who required NIE's in carrying out their responsibilities.
- (3) An increasing number of users in the intelligence community itself.
- (4) The succession of world crises which generated increased interest in national intelligence on the part of commanders and planners.
- (5) A general increase in the number of people in the government concerned with the communist threat throughout the world, developments in modern technological warfare, and the capabilities and intentions of the Soviet Bloc.
- (6) The addition of new readers overseas--political advisors, ambassadors, and military planners and commanders.
- (7) Agency reorganizations, including changes in locations of offices.
- (8) An increase in the size, responsibility, and complexity of agencies served by NIE's.
- (9) The establishment or expansion of reference and library facilities in the USIB agencies.

(10) An increase in the number of NIE's released to foreign governments. (From about 26 to 45)

(11) An apparent increase in readers whose need to know might be marginal.

b. An analysis of the returns from 636 respondents of the questionnaire addressed to NIE recipients indicated that about 50 percent were engaged in intelligence, 19 percent had responsibilities in policy planning and coordination, and 8 percent were in operations. Only 7 percent listed themselves in the area of research. However, a substantial number of readers (34 percent) indicated that they read only the NIE conclusions. The questionnaire (at Tab 1) did not solicit ideas on how NIE's might be improved.

5. Queries to Secretaries of Defense and State re Soviet Military Estimates (1969)

a. In November 1969 the DCI asked the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs for their views or suggestions as to how National Estimates on Soviet military subjects might be made "most useful" to them. Questions included: (1) is the division by subject (Strategic Attack, Strategic Defense, and General Purpose Forces) the best way of presenting the estimates; (2) is the amount of detail presented excessive and should there be different types of estimates for different readers; and (3) do existing procedures provide intelligence judgments of most vital interest, together with adequate evidence or argument, and are dissents presented adequately?

b. The Secretary of State offered no "fundamental" criticism, but his suggestions for "refinements" were as follows:

- There could be "summary estimates" for the top policy makers, more comprehensive than the "conclusions" sections of the then current estimates, but more condensed than the then current estimates. This would permit the basic NIE to be more detailed and complete with a fuller presentation of the evidence. Annexes could provide background information on major issues, and there could be greater use of maps, charts and graphs.

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- There should be a greater effort to evaluate Soviet doctrine and strategy together with discussion of the fundamental differences of opinion within the intelligence community. These could be incorporated in the "basic estimate" and this might obviate the need to issue a separate NIE 11-4 \* as frequently as in the past.
- The "summary estimates" would be written after the basic estimates were completed and would give an over-view of major Soviet weapons systems and describe significant changes in Soviet forces. They would also include a discussion of the general nature of Soviet military expenditures. The "summary estimates" for 11-3 \*\* and 11-8 \*\*\* should be combined into a single paper so policy makers would have in one document an assessment of the main elements of information on Soviet strategic forces which have to be taken into consideration in calculating the US-Soviet strategic balance. This would be useful, for example, in discussing US options for the SALT negotiations.
- The estimates might contain a brief statistical summary of US forces, including forward projections drawn from the OSD FYDP, to give the reader a basis for comparing US and Soviet forces.

c. The suggestions of the Secretary of Defense were as follows:

- Consideration should be given to relegating much of the detailed quantitative and qualitative analyses of Soviet weaponry to appropriate appendices. This would leave in the main body of the NIE only the more critical aspects of strategic weapons systems. The main body should also contain changes, disagreements of the intelligence community, and levels of confidence inherent in the principal judgments.

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\* "Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy"

\*\* "Soviet Strategic Air and Missile Defenses"

\*\*\* "Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Attack"

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- The estimates, especially the strategic attack and defense papers, should be revised and updated more often, perhaps quarterly. (The NIE on an annual basis was said to be of questionable usefulness a few months after its issuance.)
- It would be useful to include five-year estimates in the NIE's, perhaps less precise than the short-term estimates but more definitive than the ten-year trends of the then current estimates.
- Each NIE should have a section comparing major judgments of the previous NIE with the current judgment. Divergencies could be explained and tendencies to consistently over-estimate or under-estimate should be brought to the attention of the policy-maker so that he could determine the "hedge" factor he must introduce in decisions regarding defense programming and planning.

d. The change which both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense recommended--that a condensed statement of the principal findings of Soviet military estimates be prepared for the top policy-makers-- was adopted and NIE's on these subjects now have a lengthy summary and conclusions section at their beginning. Another suggestion of the Secretary of State was also adopted and resulted in a deeper probe of Soviet military strategy. NIE 11-4 (now "Issues and Options in Soviet Military Policy") has been retitled and considerably expanded in scope and depth. The Secretary of Defense's suggestion to include five-year estimates of Soviet force levels was also adopted, but in the form of several alternate projections for force levels, depending on assumptions as to the success of SALT talks, US alternate force levels, etc.

6. Meeting with the White House Staff in 1970

The Board of National Estimates and its staff members conducted a series of meetings in 1970 with the staff of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs concerning the form and content of military estimates. As a result of these meetings, a great deal more factual material was included in the estimates, together with

an expanded discussion of the factors leading to the conclusions of the estimate. On 8 March 1971 the President commended the DCI and "the entire intelligence community" for NIE 11-8-70 which the President said was a considerable improvement over the previous version. He stated that he found particularly useful:

- "--The frequent sharply-defined, clearly argued discussions of the various contested issues.
- "--The attempt to incorporate a wide range of sources, such as clandestine reports and Soviet SALT statements.
- "--The alternative force models based on explicit differences in underlying assumptions and the attempt to define which were the more likely models.
- "--The quantitative detail for each model which illustrates the differences between the models and gives an operational meaning to some of the general statements."

## CONSUMER EVALUATION OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES (NIE)

### PURPOSE

This evaluation is an element of the National Security Council Intelligence Committee (NSCIC) Working Group program to provide explicit feedback to intelligence producers from consumers. This evaluation should not be prepared by intelligence personnel. What is sought is a user evaluation of an intelligence product.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Evaluators are requested to complete this form within 30 days of receipt.

Security classification of the completed form will be based on the classification of the estimate being commented upon and classification of the comments included in the evaluation.

The completed evaluation is to be forwarded to:

D/DCI/IC  
ATTN: PRG/IC  
Room 6E18  
CIA Headquarters  
Washington, D. C. 20505

A. NIE No. and Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Publication \_\_\_\_\_

B. Evaluator Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. NIE Utility and Timeliness

1. Primary use to which NIE is being or will be put:

- |                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Policy planning _____         | d. Military R&D planning _____ |
| b. Operations planning _____     | e. Background info. _____      |
| c. Military force planning _____ | f. Other (specify) _____       |

2. Timeliness of the estimate

- a. Very timely \_\_\_\_\_ b. Timely \_\_\_\_\_ c. Not timely \_\_\_\_\_

If c is checked, why is the estimate not considered timely?

3. Utility of the NIE for ongoing or anticipated policy/operations problems:

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. Absolutely necessary _____ | d. Nice to have _____     |
| b. Very useful _____          | e. Little or no use _____ |
| c. Useful _____               |                           |

If a, b, or c is checked, which sections or portions of the estimate were particularly useful (i.e., provided specific and unique information or judgments directly applicable to policy/operations)

4. If some other source currently satisfied the need for this estimative information in an equally useful or comparable fashion, identify such source:

D. Scope and Format

1. The scope and format of the estimate are:
  - a. Excellent \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Satisfactory \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Unsatisfactory \_\_\_\_\_
2. If c. was checked, how could the scope and/or format of the estimate be improved? To accomplish what purposes?

E. Factual Data

1. For purposes of your organization, the degree to which factual data is presented is:
  - a. Excessive \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Sufficient \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Not enough \_\_\_\_\_
2. If a. or c. was checked, for what purposes would more/less detail improve the utility of the estimate?

F. Expression of Uncertainties

1. The uncertainties relating to the data or the situations described are brought out:
  - a. Excellently \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Satisfactorily \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Inadequately \_\_\_\_\_
2. For purposes of your organization, the estimate treats the full range of uncertainties:
  - a. Very well \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Adequately \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Inadequately \_\_\_\_\_
3. If the answer to 1. and/or 2. is c., how could the treatment of uncertainty have been improved?

G. Expression of Alternatives

1. For purposes of your organization, the range of alternative projections and the description of each alternative are:
  - a. Quite comprehensive \_\_\_\_
  - b. Adequate \_\_\_\_
  - c. Inadequate \_\_\_\_
2. If c. was checked, in what manner could the presentation have been improved?

H. Quality of the Estimative Logic

1. The extent to which the analysis logically ties together the factual and estimative elements of the paper is:
  - a. Excellent \_\_\_\_
  - b. Satisfactory \_\_\_\_
  - c. Inadequate \_\_\_\_
2. If c. was checked, in what manner might the quality of the estimate have been improved?

I. Overall Reaction to the Estimate

(Note: The purpose of this section is to encourage you to summarize your reactions to the estimate and to present such additional comments as you consider useful as feedback to the intelligence community. If you have made hand-written notes on the estimate itself, it would be appreciated if the estimate is returned with the evaluation form.)

1. The following words or phrases characterise this estimate:
  - a. Exceptionally valuable \_\_\_\_
  - b. Stimulating and persuasive \_\_\_\_
  - c. Imaginative new viewpoint \_\_\_\_
  - d. Rehash of conventional wisdom \_\_\_\_
  - e. Shallow and unconvincing \_\_\_\_
  - f. Dull \_\_\_\_

2. Basis for the foregoing characterization of the estimate is:

3. In summary, your overall comments as to the extent to which the estimate met the requirements of your organization are as follows: